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'Filling the post more important'

KLANG, Mon. - Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib today said priority should be given to the appointment of the new Selangor Menteri Besar and not on whether he should head the State Umno.

"Let the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) appoint the Menteri Besar first. The priority right now is that the post must be filled quickly."

Muhammad, who is former Menteri Besar and State deputy Umno chief, said: "We are confident the person chosen by the Prime Minister as the Menteri Besar will be able to take Selangor to greater heights."

The vacancy arose when Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar who served as the 12th Menteri Besar for three years and two months resigned last Thursday.

The State Umno liaison committee submitted the names of 11 candidates to Dr Mahathir on Friday.

They are Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Zainal Abidin Ahmad, 61; State Housing, Local Government and Squatters Committee chairman Datuk Mokhtar Dahalan, 56; State Entrepreneur Development and SMIs Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Fatah Iskandar, 44; State Infrastructure, Information and Information Technology Committee chairman Datuk Mohd Sharif Jajang, and State Rural Development, Agriculture and Fisheries Committee chairman Datuk Raja Ideris Raja Ahmad, 56.

The others are Selangor State Assembly Deputy Speaker Datuk Salamon Selamat 53; Selat Klang Assemblyman Datuk Zakaria Md Deros, 54; Selayang Baru Assemblyman Datuk Ahmad Bhari Abd Rahman, 51; Puchong Assemblyman Datuk Mohamad Satim Diman, 46; Hulu Bernam Assemblyman Datuk Mohamed Idris Abu Bakar, 49; and Batang Kali Assemblyman Datuk Zainal Abidin Sakom, 50.

Hot favourites among the top Umno circles for the Menteri Besar's post are Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Mokhtar and Mohd Sharif.

In Johor Baru, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said the large pool of candidates for the post did not mean there was a power struggle.

"I do not know how others view it, but in my opinion, every member of the State Assembly is a potential candidate.

"However, the 11 candidates do possess certain advantages, in terms of their posts and experience.

"However, the Prime Minister has his way of doing things. He knows what he is looking for in a Menteri Besar and he knows how to single it out," Khalil told reporters after a meeting with State Umno Wanita and Youth leaders at the Johor Umno headquarters in Jalan Yahya Awal today.

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